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ABSTRACT

Husband-to-wife violence has been the focus of much research and several theories have attempted to explain its occurrence. This study tested exchange theory and resource theory, examining the possibility that not only lower status husbands, but also husbands of higher status, may be influenced toward aggression by status discrepancies with their wives. It is based on data drawn from a cross-sectional national sample of 2,143 American couples in 1976. Questionnaires were completed through interviews with 960 men and 1,183 women. Characteristics measured were husband-to-wife violence, socioeconomic status, status discrepancies between spouses, marital power, status concern, and background variables. The sample had 1,839 couples reporting no violence and 250 couples reporting violence in the past year. The relationship between husband's occupational prestige and husband-to-wife violence was found to vary according to the wife's occupational prestige. When the wife's status was low, she had a relatively high probability of being assaulted regardless of the husband's prestige; and while high prestige wives had a lower risk of abuse overall, the chances of high status wives being victimized increased as their husbands' status decreased. The finding that a husband's prestige was not related to violence when the wife's prestige was low but was negatively related when the wife's prestige was high suggests that the effect of the husband's occupational prestige on violence depends on the wife's prestige. (NB)

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STATUS DISCREPANCIES AND HUSBAND-TO-WIFE VIOLENCE*[1]

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STATUS DISCREPANCIES AND HUSBAND-TO-WIFE VIOLENCE

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Husband-to-wife violence has become the focus of a great deal of research over the past decade. A number of theories have been formulated attempting to explain its occurrence (Gelles and Straus 1979), and there are conflicting findings from tests of those theories (Breines and Gordon 1983). This study tests two of these theories, both of which focus on each spouse's relative access to external rewards as a determinant of husband-to-wife violence: exchange theory and its derivative, resource theory.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Exchange theory proposes that participants in any social interaction, including marriage partners, expect a fair exchange of rights and obligations from one another. Homans (1960) describes this expectation of fairness in his concept of distributive justice. The distributive justice hypothesis holds that each participant in a relationship gauges the fairness of the exchange of rewards relative to the "investments" each brings to the relationship. Investments in an exchange include background characteristics, ascribed or achieved, which a person brings to a social relation (Homans 1960, p.237).

In the context of the husband and wife relationship, distributive justice is determined by the ratio of rewards received (eg. financial means, social approval, compliance, and power) to investments brought to the marriage. If a spouse's investments are deemed disproportionate to the rewards received from the relationship, then a state of distributive injustice is said to exist which Homans suggests can lead to expressions of anger and aggression.

Resource theory as articulated by Blood and Wolfe (1960) seeks to explain power differences between husband and wife in modern marriages. It has been applied to violence in the family by Goode (1971). Goode identifies four sets of resources which people use to influence others in a manner that is beneficial to them, thus gaining rewards for themselves. These are "economic variables, prestige or respect, force and its threat...and likability...or love" (1971, p.624). In this context, force can be seen as a resource which a spouse can employ in lieu of, or in combination with, other types of resources. Goode suggests, then, that lower class males "may be impelled to use overt force because they lack other resources that yield power...." (1971, p.628). In the case of upper class husbands, Goode suggests that "the greater the other resources an individual can command, the more force he can muster, but the less he will actually deploy or use force in an overt manner" (p.628). Violence is thus portrayed as a resource of last resort because of the potential costs involved in its use (Nye, 1979).

Competing Hypotheses from Exchange and Resource Theories

Deductions from both theories generally predict a relationship between status differences in marriage and the incidence of husband-to-wife violence. However, they focus on two different types of status imbalances in marriage. The distributive justice hypothesis of exchange theory predicts higher rates of husband-to-wife violence when the husband's status is higher than his wife's. Higher rates of aggression are predicted if the husband also perceives the rewards provided by his wife, such as esteem and deference, as insufficient to offset their different levels of investment.

Resource theory, on the other hand, predicts a different relationship between status differences in marriage and husband-to-wife violence. It suggests that violence is used in lieu of other resources to maintain power in marriage. When a husband is low in economic resources and social prestige, resource theorists such as Goode (1970) predict, he will be more likely to resort to violence to dominate the marriage. Resource theory thus predicts that those husbands whose social status positions are lower than their wives' will exhibit higher rates of husband-to-wife violence. Therefore, resource theory predicts the opposite effect of status differences in marriage on husband-to-wife violence than is predicted by exchange theory's distributive justice hypothesis.

STATUS DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN SPOUSES

Many researchers have studied the effects of spouses' socioeconomic status on marriage (Becker 1973; Blood and Wolfe 1960; Santos 1975). Becker examined the effects of what he calls negative utility on marital dissolution, suggesting that failure to meet a certain level of expectations of economic gains in a marriage can lead to divorce (1977). Two studies (D'Amico 1983; Hiller and Philliber 1982) corroborate Becker's findings. Oppenheimer also stresses the role of socioeconomic variables in marriage. She emphasizes the importance of including both the husband's and the wife's contributions to the family's overall socioeconomic status (1977).

Divergent status positions in the family can be problematic in two ways. First, it creates problems for the individual who contributes less in terms of income or status in that it can put him or her at a disadvantage relative to other family members. Secondly, divergent status positions among family members can threaten the overall status position of the family. Thus, Oppenheimer suggests that "for reasons of status maintenance, status compatibility among family members is important...negative consequences will ensue if the wife has a much lower as well as a much higher socioeconomic status than the husband" (p.403).

Status Discrepancies and Marital Dissatisfaction

A number of studies have investigated the relationship between status discrepancy and marital dissatisfaction, often with conflicting results (Pleck 1977, Richardson 1979, Simpson and England 1981, Tynes 1983). Pearlin's (1975) research indicates that an intervening variable may exist in the relationship between status inequality and stress or

dissatisfaction in marriage which could account for the lack of consistent findings in this area. Pearlin found status differences in marriage to be significantly related to perceptions of marital reciprocity only for those who valued their status advancement. That is, within the subsample of those who highly valued status attainment, status differences between spouses were related to perceptions of inequity within the marriage.

In a similar study on the effects of status relationships on life and marital satisfaction, Hornung and McCullough (1981) found support for Pearlin's model. They found that "combinations of sex and achievement orientation function as a suppressor variable" in their model (p.134). When respondent's gender and value of their status achievement were not included in the analysis, no significant relationship was found between status differences and marital satisfaction. When these controls were included, a significant relationship was found only for those to whom status advancement was of high concern. In particular, when the wife's education or occupational status were high relative to her husband's level of education, the husband tended to be more dissatisfied with his marriage. Conversely, when women's own educational or occupational status were below the expected levels given their husbands' education or occupation, the wives reported more marital dissatisfaction. Further, these relationships are only significant for the subsamples of men and women who value status advancement.

Status Discrepancies and Marital Violence

Two studies investigated the particular problem of marital violence in connection with status discrepancies. Witte et al. (1984) examined the relationship between partners' economic resources and the frequency of wife abuse in a sample of 125 battered women from Santa Barbara County, California. They state:

> "Our empirical results indicate that the effect on violence of a change in the male's economic status depends primarily on the level of his employment and income whereas the effect on violence of a change in the female's economic status depends heavily on her economic status relative to her partner." (p.35.)

They conclude that husband-to-wife violence may be a resource used by men to obtain power in their marriages when their relative status positions deprive them of a legitimate claim to such power.

The other study that addressed the question of status discrepancies and marital violence directly was conducted by Hornung et al. (1981). They analyzed a probability sample of 1,553 women in Kentucky. In general, they found that occupational and educational incompatibilities were more important than occupation or education per se in predicting couple violence. They hypothesized that differences in income levels would have a similar effect, though no data on income was available for this sample.

Hornung et al. found that certain levels of discrepancies were related to higher rates of violence, while others were associated with lower rates. For example, when the husband's education or occupation was high given the wife's status, the incidence rate of couple violence tended

to be higher. Similarly, when the wife's educational or occupational status was low given her husband's status, the incidence rate of couple violence was also higher. On the other hand, incidence rates of violence were lowest when the wife had higher educational or occupational status, given her husband's status (1981, p.687). These findings tend to support the exchange theory hypothesis of distributive justice. They also seem to contradict the prediction from resource theory that men with a status disadvantage relative to their wife will exhibit greater violence towards their wives than men with greater status resources.

METHODS

Sample

This study is based on data drawn from a cross-sectional national sample of 2,143 American couples in 1976 (Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz 1980) which has been shown to be representative of American couples when compared to census data in terms of major demographic characteristics (Yllo and Straus, 1981). Questionnaires were completed through face-to-face interviews with 960 men and 1,183 women. Most questions were asked with reference to both respondent and spouse, and were later transposed to indicate husbands' and wives' characteristics. Table 1 lists summary statistics of the sample.

(Table 1 about here)

Measures

Husband-to-Wife Violence. Husband-to-Wife violence was a dichotomous variable derived from the Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus 1979) which measures responses to marital conflict ranging from "discussing the issue calmly" to the use of a weapon. Responses were coded as exhibiting husband-to-wife violence if the husband had been reported to have committed one or more of the following acts in the year prior to the survey: threw something at his wife; pushed, grabbed or shoved his wife; slapped or spanked his wife; kicked, bit or hit her with his fist; hit or tried to hit her with something; beat her up; threatened to use, or actually used a knife or gun. All other couples where no such violent incidents were reported were coded as not exhibiting husband-to-wife violence. The dependent variable of husband-to-wife violence has a dramatically skewed distribution with 12% of the 2,143 couples surveyed reporting one or more violent incidents in the last year.

Socioeconomic Status. The independent variables measuring socioeconomic status were education, occupational prestige, and income of both husband and wife. Educational attainment was grouped into five categories: no formal education through 8th grade, some high school experience without graduating, high school graduates, those with some college experience but who did not complete a degree, and college graduates. Occupational status was measured using Treiman's Standard Scale of Occupational Prestige (Treiman, 1977). This is a continuous prestige scale designed for cross-cultural and cross-sectional comparisons. The scale as it was used in this study was grouped into 10

intervals with a theoretical range of 0 to 10 points where 0 is the lowest possible prestige and 10 is very high occupational prestige. The occupational status of spouses who were unemployed at the time of the survey was based on their last paid position. The sample had an actual range from 1 to 7. Annual income was measured in 13 intervals, each coded at its midpoint, with a range from $500 (indicating no income to $1,000) to $45,000 (indicating $35,000 or more).

Status Discrepancies between Spouses. Measures of discrepant status relations between husband and wife were derived in two steps. First, six dichotomous dummy variables were created where the husband's or wife's education, income, or occupational prestige were equal to 1 if they fell in the lowest quartile of their respective distributions, and were otherwise equal to 0. Secondly, each of these dummy variables was multiplied by the spouse's education, income, or occupational prestige to create six interaction terms.

These interaction terms allow the equation to estimate the effects of a person's SES when their spouse's SES is low. For example, to measure the effect of husband's education when his wife was not a high school graduate, the husband's education was multiplied by the dummy variable for wife's education. To estimate the effect of husband's income when his wife had no outside income, the equation included the husband's income multiplied by the dummy variable for wife's income, and so on. Similar interaction terms were used to measure the effects of wife's education, income and occupational prestige when the husband's respective SES variables were low.

Marital Power. Husband dominance was included in the analysis to test the resource theory explanation of the effect of status differences on husband-to-wife violence. Husband dominance was conceived of as a type of marital power measured by a version of Blood and Wolfe's Decision Power Index (1960). The index measures marital power based on who has the "final say" in decisions regarding six areas of interest: what type of car to buy, whether to have children, what job each spouse should take, whether either spouse should leave his or her job, what house or apartment to live in, and how much money should be spent for food for the family each week. Answers for each area may fall into one of 5 categories: Wife only, Wife more than husband, Husband and wife equally, Husband more than wife, and Husband only. Husband-dominance was measured as a dummy variable where couples were coded as one if the husband was reported to have the "final say" in four or more of the six areas. All other couples were coded as 0, indicating a decision-making power structure that was not husband dominant.

Status Concern. The analysis was repeated only for the subsample of husbands who showed high status concern to test exchange theory's distributive justice hypothesis. The need to control for status concern was suggested by the research of Pearlin (1975), and Hornung and McCullough (1981). In this dataset, three questions were asked with regard to both respondent and spouse which can be used as indicators of status concern: 1. How often would you say you/your partner is ambitious, works hard, and has high standards? 2. How satisfied are you/is your partner with your financial situation? 3. How concerned are you/is your partner about economic security? Responses for each of the three measures

were originally coded using a likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 with 5 indicating high status concern.

Husband's status concern was measured by an index which was computed in the following two steps: 1. Each of the three questions for husbands were aggregated into quartiles. 2. The recoded questions were then added together to form an index of husbands' status concern. As in Pearlin's and Hornung and McCullough's work, a separate analysis was conducted selecting only those couples where the husband's status concern fell in the highest quartile of the index. This was done to test the proposition that the relationships between status discrepancies and husband-to-wife violence are stronger when the husband is highly concerned with status attainment.

Background variables which were included as controls were the age of husband, age of wife, and race of respondent. Age of respondent was measured as a continuous variable ranging from 18 to 70 years. Unfortunately, the question about racial background was not asked regarding the respondent's spouse so that race of both husband and wife of each couple was unavailable. For this reason, the race variable had to be measured at the respondent level. Race of respondent was coded into two dummy variables, one for Blacks and one for Hispanics.

Logistic Regression

The dependent variable of husband-to-wife violence is dichotomous and extremely skewed (this sample has 1,839 couples reporting no violence as compared to 250 couples reporting one or more violent incidents in the past year). Therefore, Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) multiple regression cannot be appropriately applied (Hanushek and Jackson, 1977). Logistic regression was used because it is a viable alternative to OLS in the multivariate analysis of such a dependent variable (Aldrich and Nelson, 1984).[2]

Aldrich and Nelson (1984, p.44) suggest that the effects implied by a logistic regression model are best explored graphically. This was done by using the logistic equation:

$$(L = a + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + \ldots)$$

to estimate the probability of the occurrence of the dependent variables. All X variables which are not explicitly included in a given graph are set at their median values. Only the independent variable which is chosen to be plotted against the predicted probabilities of the occurrence of Y is allowed to vary over the range of its values (Hamilton 1987).

In each regression analysis, the measures of husbands' and wives' socioeconomic status were included along with the interaction terms as explanatory variables. This was done to determine if spouses' status relations measured by the interaction terms were related to the dependent measures above and beyond the simple effects of the SES measures themselves. In each instance, backward elimination was used to simplify the model being tested and to reduce potential multicollinearity within the model.

(Table 2 about here)

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AND HUSBAND-TO-WIFE VIOLENCE

The correlation matrix in Table 2 demonstrates that the three measures of SES are related to one another both within individuals, and between husbands and wives. This corroborates the concept of a norm of status homogeneity in marriage under which people are expected to marry others from similar status backgrounds, particularly in terms of their educational attainment (Oppenheimer 1977, Pearlin 1975).

Separate logistic regression analyses were performed for husband's and wife's education, occupational prestige, and income. These bivariate analyses show the overall relationship of each of the six measures of socioeconomic status to husband-to-wife violence without regard to the values of the other five SES variables. This is quite different from the multivariate analysis, to be discussed later, which will indicate the effect each SES variable has on husband-to-wife violence when all the other variables in the equation are held constant.

(Table 3 about here)

Table 3 summarizes the results of the six bivariate logistic regression analyses. Significant negative relationships are found for husbands' and wives' income and occupational prestige, i.e. the higher the income or occupational prestige, the lower the probability of husband-to-wife violence. However, no significant relationships were found between husbands' or wives' educational attainment and husband-to-wife violence. This finding lends support to the proposition that marital relations are influenced primarily by economic variables (Becker 1977, Long et al. 1983). This idea will be further supported if, in the multivariate analysis, occupational status is not shown to be related to husband-to-wife violence when income levels are held constant.

STATUS DISCREPANCIES AND HUSBAND-TO-WIFE VIOLENCE

Husband-to-wife violence was regressed against the SES variables and interaction terms to test the direct effects of status discrepancies on violence. This analysis addresses two questions: Regardless of how decision-making power is distributed between husband and wife, do men with higher status tend to be more violent when married to women with low status? Or, again without respect to marital power, do women with higher status tend to be victims of husband-to-wife violence when their husbands' status is low?

Results from the first multivariate logistic regression equation are given in Appendix Table 1. Of the six SES variables, all but two (wife's education and occupational prestige) were found to be significantly related to husband-to-wife violence. In contrast, only two of the six interaction terms are related at the $p < .1$ level of significance. None of the three interaction terms which measure the effects of wife's status when her husband's status is low were found to be related to husband-to-wife violence. The interaction terms which are related to husband-to-wife

violence are husband's income when his wife has no income and husband's occupational prestige when his wife's prestige is low.

(Table 4 about here)

(Figure 1 about here)

Table 4 gives the logistic regression results when the equation is reduced via backward elimination. The following five variables are related to husband-to-wife violence at the $p < .05$ level of significance: husband's education, husband's income, wife's income, husband's occupational prestige, and the interaction term measuring husband's occupational prestige when wife's prestige is low. Figure 1 plots this interaction effect. The flat slope at the top of Figure 1 shows that, when wife's prestige is low, there is no relationship between husband's occupational prestige and the probability of husband-to-wife violence. The pronounced slope of the bottom line shows that, when wife's prestige is high, the higher the husband's occupational prestige, the lower the probability of husband-to-wife violence. Another important point is that the line which represents lower status wives appears above the one for higher status wives. This shows that lower status wives have a greater probability of being victims of husband-to-wife violence overall. However, at the lowest level of husband's occupational prestige, the probability of husband-to-wife violence is almost the same for the two groups of women. As husband's occupational prestige rises, the higher status wives' chances of being victimized drops off from roughly two in ten to one in ten. The pattern shown in Figure 1 seems to support the hypothesis based on resource theory that lower status men turn to violence when their dominance is challenged by their wives' increased access to outside resources. In contrast, exchange theory predicts that lower status wives have a greater chance of being victims of husband-to-wife violence when their husbands' status is high. This prediction was not supported (at least using occupational prestige as the measure of relative status), when education and income levels are held constant.

Husband Dominance

Secondly, the question as to whether status discrepancies might affect husband-to-wife violence only through their effects on the intervening variable of husband-dominance was addressed. This proposition was tested by regressing the SES variables, interaction terms, and husband dominance against husband-to-wife violence. If husband-dominance was truly an intervening variable, then the SES variables and interaction terms would not continue to show significant relationships to husband-to-wife violence when husband-dominance was held constant. The reduced version of this equation was also useful because it included both the significant status variables and husband dominance as predictors of husband-to-wife violence. As such, results from this equation were used to demonstrate interactions between husband dominance and status discrepancies.

(Table 5 about here)

Appendix Table 2 shows the logistic regression results from this equation. The relationships between the status variables and husband-to-

wife violence remain essentially unchanged. The two interaction terms which were previously shown to be related to husband-to-wife violence (husband's income when wife had no income and husband's occupational prestige when wife's prestige was low) continue to be so. Table 5 displays the logistic regression results after backward elimination of all the variables which were not related at the $p < .1$ level of significance. Status discrepancies clearly have an impact on husband-to-wife violence apart from their possible indirect effects through husband dominance.

(Figure 2 about here)

A second question which can be addressed by this last equation is how husband dominance influences the relationship between status discrepancies and husband-to-wife violence. This question was investigated by focusing on the 200 couples classified as husband dominant. Figure 2 displays the interaction effect of husbands' and wives' occupational prestige <u>when husbands dominate decision-making</u>. Compared to Figure 1 which displayed the same relationships without regard to husband dominance, the interaction is quite different. First, husbands' occupational prestige is negatively related to the probability of husband-to-wife violence regardless of whether wives' prestige level is high or low. Second, the line representing wives with higher occupational prestige appears above that for lower status wives. This shows that high status wives are <u>more</u> likely to be victims of violence at any given level of husbands' prestige than are low status wives: just the opposite of the earlier effect shown in Figure 1.

Highlighting the highest and lowest probability levels in Figure 2 helps to infer its theoretical implications. According to resource theory, the highest probability of violence is predicted for dominant low status husbands against their higher status wives. This is exactly what is shown in Figure 2: the lower status husbands use violence to maintain power in marriage. Among these dominant husbands, the probability of violence decreases as the occupational status of the husband increases, whether the wife's status is high or low.

Exchange theory, on the other hand, predicts a greater chance of violence by high status husbands when wives' status is low. However, Figure 2 shows the <u>lowest</u> probability of violence by high status husbands against low status wives. This may not be an adequate test of the distributive justice hypothesis because Figure 2 includes only husband-dominant couples. It is possible that the dominant higher status husbands may perceive their increased power as sufficient compensation for their higher levels of investment.

(Figure 3 about here)

Figure 3 explores these theoretical implications further by displaying the relationship between husbands' prestige and husband-to-wife violence separately for dominant husbands and non-dominant husbands <u>when wives' prestige is high</u>. Figure 3 provides further corroboration of resource theory. The bottom line confirms that, among couples where the wives' status is high, lower status husbands do not show a much greater probability of violence as long as they do not try to dominate in the marriage. Where husbands are dominant, as seen in the upper line in Figure 3, husbands at the lowest level of occupational prestige have a

nearly double the predicted probability of violence against their high status wives than do dominant professional husbands. This, in combination with the finding from Figure 2 that dominant husbands have a greater probability of committing husband-to-wife violence when married to higher status wives, provides strong support for the resource theory of power in marriage.

Status Concern

The findings thus far have shown that husband's education and occupational prestige, husband's and wife's income, and husband dominance are all related to husband-to-wife violence. The interaction terms for husband's prestige when his wife's is low, and husband's income when his wife has no income are also significant, even when holding husband's and wife's levels of occupational prestige and income constant. Because this paper tests two social psychological theories, it was thought that these relationships might be strongest for those husbands who expressed concern over their status attainment. Perhaps status discrepancies are especially troubling for these men. To investigate this possibility, a subsample was drawn which consisted of couples where the husbands scored in the highest quartile of the status concern index. The last logistic regression equation, including all significant variables at the $p < .1$ level, was then applied to this subsample.

(Table 6 about here)

Table 6 displays the results. Among couples where the husband is highly concerned with status attainment, the measures which are significantly related to husband-to-wife violence are husband's and wife's income and the status discrepancy measure for husband's occupation when his wife's is low. Several measures were related to husband-to-wife violence in the overall sample but are not found to be related in this subsample: husband's education and occupational prestige, the discrepancy term for income, and husband dominance.

The effect of the interaction between husband's and wife's occupational prestige on the probability of husband-to-wife violence is strikingly different for the subsample of high status concern husbands. Figure 4 plots the predicted probabilities of violence by husbands' occupational prestige separately for wives with high prestige and again for wives whose prestige is low. Recall the findings from the overall sample graphed in Figure 1. Figure 1 showed that husband's occupational prestige was not related to husband-to-wife violence when wife's status was low, and was negatively related when wife's status was high. In contrast, Figure 4 displays almost the opposite effects for this subsample of high status concern husbands. First, the top line in Figure 4 shows that, when wife's prestige is <u>low</u>, the higher the husband's occupational prestige the greater the probability of husband-to-wife violence. Second, the bottom line shows that, when wives' prestige is <u>high</u>, there is <u>no relationship</u> between husband's occupational prestige and husband-to-wife violence.

The findings presented in this figure seem to fit the distributive justice hypothesis of exchange theory. Husbands who value status attainment are about equally likely to be violent across all levels of

occupational prestige when their wives' status is high. Even husbands at the lowest prestige level do not have a high probability of violence against their high status wives, perhaps because they are gaining something they value (namely, status) from the relationship. However, when wives' status is low, a direct relationship between husband's prestige and the probability of violence is evident in this subsample. The highest probability of violence is shown for professional husbands against their low status wives. This strongly supports the proposition derived from exchange theory that husbands who contribute more to their marriage in terms of status, if they highly value status, may become angry at the inequity and express that anger violently.

DEMOGRAPHIC CONTROLS

To investigate the possibility that these relationships are spurious due to the association of age and race to SES, measures of husband's and wife's age, and dummy variables for Black and Hispanic respondents were added to the last logistic equation. The only control variable which proves to be related to husband-to-wife violence when SES levels are held constant is that of husband's age.

Appendix Table 3 shows the logistic regression results when age of husband is added along with the seven variables which had been found to be related to husband-to-wife violence. When husband's age is held constant, the significance of the relationships of husband-to-wife violence to husband's education and occupational prestige, and husband dominance are diminished. The relationships that remain significant at the $p < .1$ level are husband's and wife's income, and the two status discrepancy variables. This helps to validate the previous analyses by showing that status discrepancies are not merely spuriously related to husband-to-wife violence via some association with spouses' ages, or race of respondent.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was designed to test two competing theories of the relationship between status discrepancies in marriage and husband-to-wife violence. In so doing, it has theoretical and methodological features which make it unique among studies of the effects of status discrepancies in marriage. The study compares exchange theory with resource theory, thereby examining the possibility that not only lower status husbands, but also husbands of higher status, may be influenced towards aggression by status discrepancies with their wives.

Secondly, the wife's own socioeconomic status was used to define status discrepancies in marriage. While Oppenheimer (1977) has stressed the importance of the wife's socioeconomic role within the family, many studies of the effects of status incompatibility define it by comparing husband's status to that of his father-in-law (two examples are O'Brien 1971 and Pearlin 1975). Still others consider wife's employment without regard to the prestige of her occupation (Brown 1980, Witte et al. 1984). One caveat should be offered regarding a potential source of measurement error of wives' status in this study, however: A large proportion of wives

(39%) were not working at the time of the survey, so their occupational status was based on their most recent employment.[3]

The most important methodological feature of the study is its use of logistic regression. This allows the probability of husband-to-wife violence to be estimated, from its dichotomous occurrence, in a multivariate analysis. Of the previous two studies on status incompatibility and marital violence, one examined the prevalence of husband-to-wife violence among battered women (Witte et al. 1984); and the other did not include a multivariate analysis of the couple violence incidence rates they studied (Hornung et al. 1981). Lastly, this study includes specifications for husband dominance and status concern which proved to be important intervening variables in the relationship between status discrepancies and husband-to-wife violence.

Major Findings

The relationship between husband's occupational prestige and husband-to-wife violence was found to vary according to whether the wife's occupational prestige was either low (below the median) or high (at or above the median). Analysis of the overall sample revealed two important findings: when wife's status is low, she has a relatively high probability of being assaulted regardless of the husband's prestige; and while high prestige wives have a lower risk of abuse overall, the chances of high status wives being victimized increase as her husband's status decreases.

In addition, the interaction between husbands' and wives' occupational prestige also varies according to husbands' dominance and "status concern". Analysis of the husband-dominant couples in this sample reveal three major findings: 1. among "husband-dominant" couples, regardless of the wife's prestige, the lower the husband's occupational status, the greater the probability of assault; 2. dominant husbands were more likely to commit violence against higher status wives than lower status wives; and 3. among non-dominant husbands, husband's occupational prestige has little relationship to husband's violence toward high status wives. Finally, among couples where the husband expressed high "status concern," high status wives are less likely to be victimized regardless of their husbands' prestige levels. If wives of these status concern husbands have low status, on the other hand, the probability of husband-to-wife violence increases as the husbands' status increases.

Implications of Major Findings

The finding that husbands' prestige is not related to husband-to-wife violence when wives' prestige is low but is negatively related when wives' prestige is high (Figure 1) indicates that the effect of the husband's occupational prestige on husband-to-wife violence depends on the wife's prestige. This underscores the importance of considering wives' status as well as husbands' when studying the effects of social status on marital relations.

The remainder of the findings when taken together show that status discrepancies increase the probability of husband-to-wife violence for two

types of husbands: lower status husbands against their higher status wives, if the husbands seek to dominate decision-making (shown in Figures 2 and 3); and higher status husbands against their lower status wives, if the husbands are concerned about their status attainment (shown in Figure 4). Several questions remain, however, as to the intermediary social-psychological processes connecting status discrepancies to this outcome. The following explanations of the findings draw from previous theoretical and empirical works to suggest future avenues of investigation.

Low Status Dominant Husbands. First, the findings have indicated that women in occupational positions with average or above status are at higher risk of being battered if they are married to men who dominate decision-making. Further, these higher status women have an even higher chance of being victimized if their dominant husbands are also in low status occupations. This suggests that lower status husbands who subscribe to traditional male dominant norms have difficulty maintaining their power without the use of force if their wives are in superior status positions. This may be because norms ascribing power to males by virtue of their gender are gradually weakening in post-industrialized society (Blood and Wolfe 1960). In their stead, power in marriage has become increasingly influenced by external forces such as spouses' relative status positions. Husbands must now rely on their greater access to outside resources to justify their power in the family (Allen and Straus 1980, Blood and Wolfe 1960). Husbands wishing to maintain their dominance in marriage who do not have the superior resources to do so legitimately are more likely to do so by force.

Future empirical work might address the following questions: Do lower status husbands subscribe to traditional male power norms more than do higher status husbands? How do lower status husbands justify their continuing dominance in marriage? Do higher status dominant husbands use their access to outside resources to justify their power over their wives? Is it traditional gender role attitudes, or husband dominance, or both, that leads lower status dominant husbands to be more likely to abuse higher status wives?

High Status, Status Concern Husbands. This study also found that, when husbands are concerned about status attainment, lower status wives are more likely to be abused than higher status wives. Furthermore, lower status wives have the greatest chance of being victimized, estimated at about 4 in ten, when their husbands have status concerns and are in high status positions. Because "the rules of the game have changed," Oppenheimer submits, a husband's overall status is a function of both his and his wife's occupational status (1977, p.388). The emerging egalitarian ethic in American society encompasses the belief that wives should contribute more equally to the family's status (Scanzoni 1972). Therefore, higher status husbands may feel angry when their aspirations are hindered by wives in lower status occupations. Secondly, because they consider status so important, these husbands may also feel angry at a perceived lack of reciprocity in their marriages when they contribute more to the family's status than their wives (Pearlin 1975).

A study which tests these theoretical explanations needs to include the following measures: 1) More complete measures of status concern to include direct questions of concern for status advancement such as found in the works of Hornung and McCullough (1981) and Pearlin (1975). 2) Sex

role attitude scales to measure egalitarian attitudes. 3) Questions to address spouses' beliefs as to what constitutes fair exchange in marriage. 4) information on perceived reciprocity in marriage, such as the questions used by Pearlin (1975).

These measures can be used to address the following questions: What do couples with divided or egalitarian power structures believe constitutes a fair exchange in their marriages? To what extent does status play a role in their evaluation of fairness in that exchange? Do egalitarian norms lead husbands to expect their wives to contribute to the status of the family by working? When wives do not contribute to the marriage by working in higher status positions, do husbands tend to perceive a lack of reciprocity in their marriages? Is this the case only when husbands highly value their status attainment and advancement? Is it a perceived lack of reciprocity, or hindrance of status advancement, or a combination of the two that lead higher status, status concern husbands to be more likely to abuse their lower status wives?

Conclusions

This study was initially conceived as a test of two competing theories. Surprisingly, the findings are consistent with both the resource theory of power and the distributive justice hypothesis of exchange theory of husband-to-wife violence. If considered together, these findings suggest an integration of resource and exchange theories which can strengthen their applicability to the study of husband-to-wife violence.

Allen and Straus found that the "ultimate resource theory of violence" seems to apply only to working class husbands (1980, p.203). Their explanations offer theoretical insights concerning the circumstances under which status discrepancies were found to be related to husband-to-wife violence in this study. First, they submit that marital violence by working class husbands tends to be instrumental, i.e. toward the purpose of maintaining husband dominance. This explanation seems to apply to the first circumstance, where dominant lower status husbands are more likely to commit violence against higher status wives. The findings of this study therefore corroborate resource theory as it has been previously articulated by Allen and Straus (1980), Brown (1980), and Goode (1971).

The second circumstance, where higher status husbands are more likely to abuse lower status wives, requires a different application of an exchange framework beyond resource theory. To explain their findings for middle class men, Allen and Straus propose that middle class husbands subscribe to egalitarian power norms to a greater extent than do working class men. They also suggest that violence by middle class husbands may be primarily expressive as opposed to the instrumental violence of working class husbands. This explanation is consistent with the distributive justice hypothesis. Egalitarian power norms give rise to greater expectations of reciprocity in terms of both the rights and obligations of marriage partners. Under the distributive justice hypothesis, perceived violations of this norm are expected to lead to expressions of anger and even violence. Thus, the distributive justice hypothesis offers a viable explanation for the finding that husbands with high status and status

concern demonstrate a greater chance of committing violence against their lower status wives.

We have seen how the impact of status differences between spouses on husband-to-wife violence may be mediated by attitudes of male dominance or material egalitarianism. In the case of lower status husbands, resource theory explains how traditional values of male dominance can lead to violence against higher status wives. Conversely in the case of higher status husbands, the distributive justice hypothesis explains how more contemporary values of status advancement may lead to violence against lower status wives. In either case, what Pearlin calls "status consciousness" (1975, p.356) seems to permeate marital relations to an even greater extent than in more traditional societies as wives acquire status positions apart from those of their husbands. As patriarchal norms ascribing roles to family members on the basis of gender and lineage recede, ambiguity arises regarding spouses' rights and obligations. In the face of this ambiguity, men who are married to women in different status positions than their own may experience feelings of threat to their dominance or resentment over the hindrance of their ambitions. These feelings may then be expressed in violence against their status discrepant wives.

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FOOTNOTES

2. Many problems are encountered when such a dependent variable is analyzed using the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression method. These problems fall into three categories: 1. violations of the assumption of homoskedasticity necessary for the efficiency and significance testing of OLS, 2. questions of the appropriateness of the linear form of the OLS equation, and 3. unreasonable predicted values of the dependent variable from the OLS analysis (Hanushek and Jackson 1977). The logistic regression method solves these problems by applying a special nonlinear transformation to the dependent variable. The probability of Y=1 (P) is assumed to be a function of the X variables in the model. The estimate of the probability is first constrained to be less than 1 by transforming it to the odds ratio (P/(1-P)). The estimate is constrained to be positive by taking its natural logarithm [log(P/(1-P))]. This results in a transformation of the equation such that the dependent variable is no longer the dichotomous occurrence of Y. The equation is instead now estimating the log of the odds ratio (the "logit") which is a continuous variable bounded at 0 and 1 (Aldrich and Nelson 1984 p.31-31).

3. To test the extent to which this is a problem in this study, the logistic regression analyses were repeated adding a dummy variable for wives' employment/nonemployment. If the findings were due to systematic measurement error of housewives' occupational prestige, controlling for wives' employment ought to weaken the relationships in the model. Replicating the analyses adding a measure for employed vs. nonemployed wives did not alter the relationships between the SES variables, the interaction term for husband's prestige when wife's is low, and husband-to-wife violence. In fact, the dichotomous variable for wives' employment was not found to be related to husband-to-wife violence in these multivariate analyses.

Figure 1. Probability of Husband-to-Wife Violence by Husband's Occupational Prestige

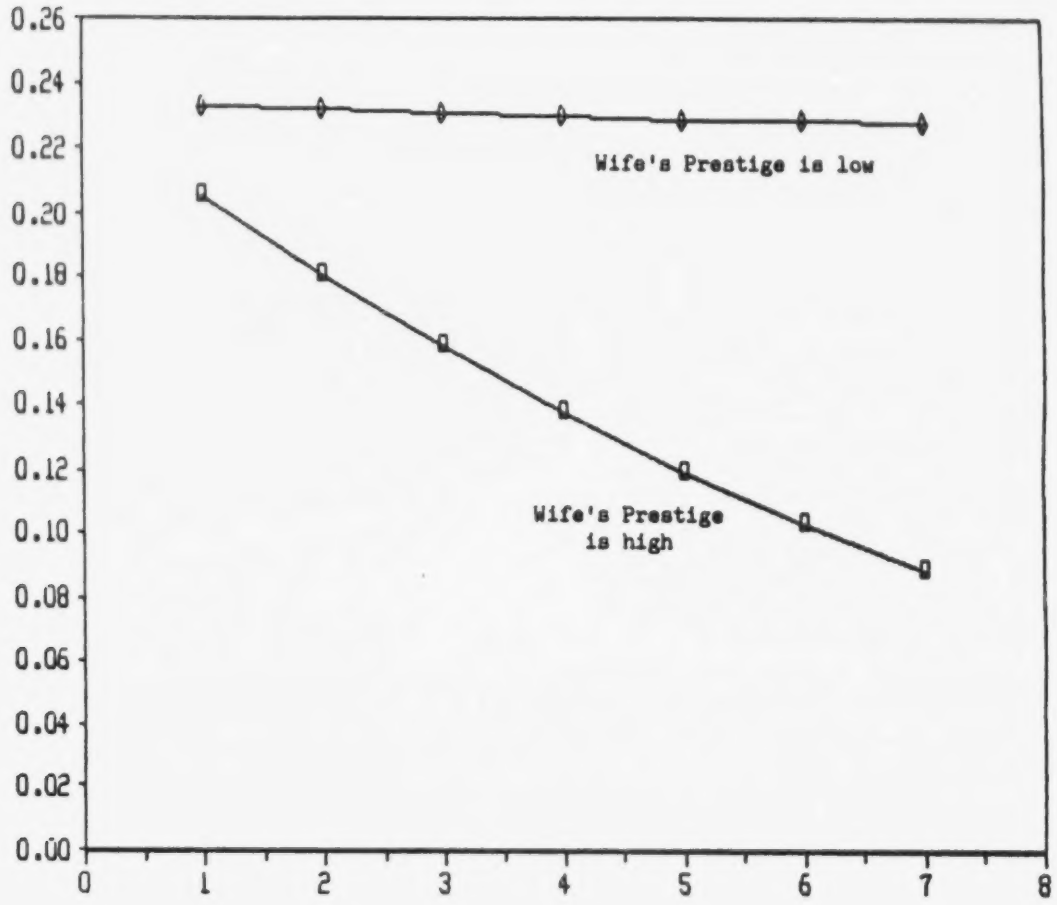

Figure 2. Dominant Husbands: Probability of Husband-to-Wife Violence by Husband's Occupational Prestige

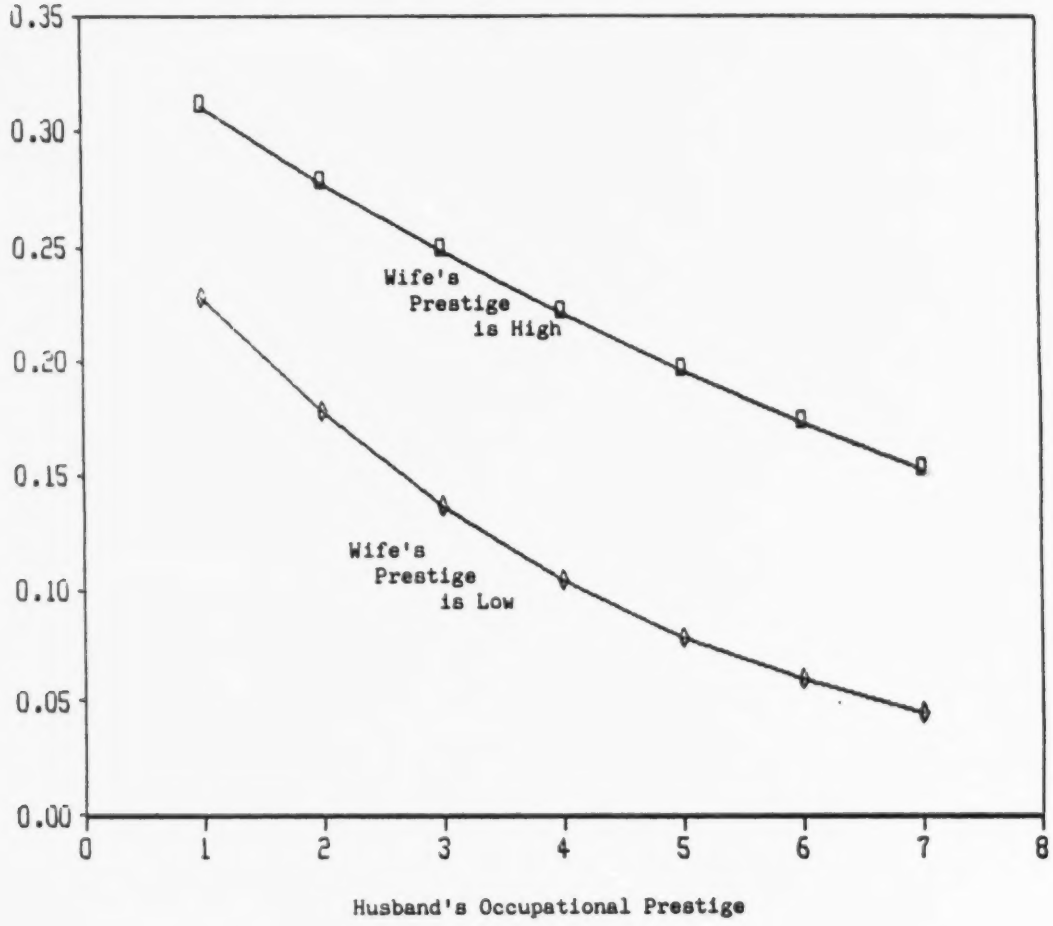

Figure 3. High Status Wives: Probability of Husband-to-Wife Violence by Husband's Occupational Prestige

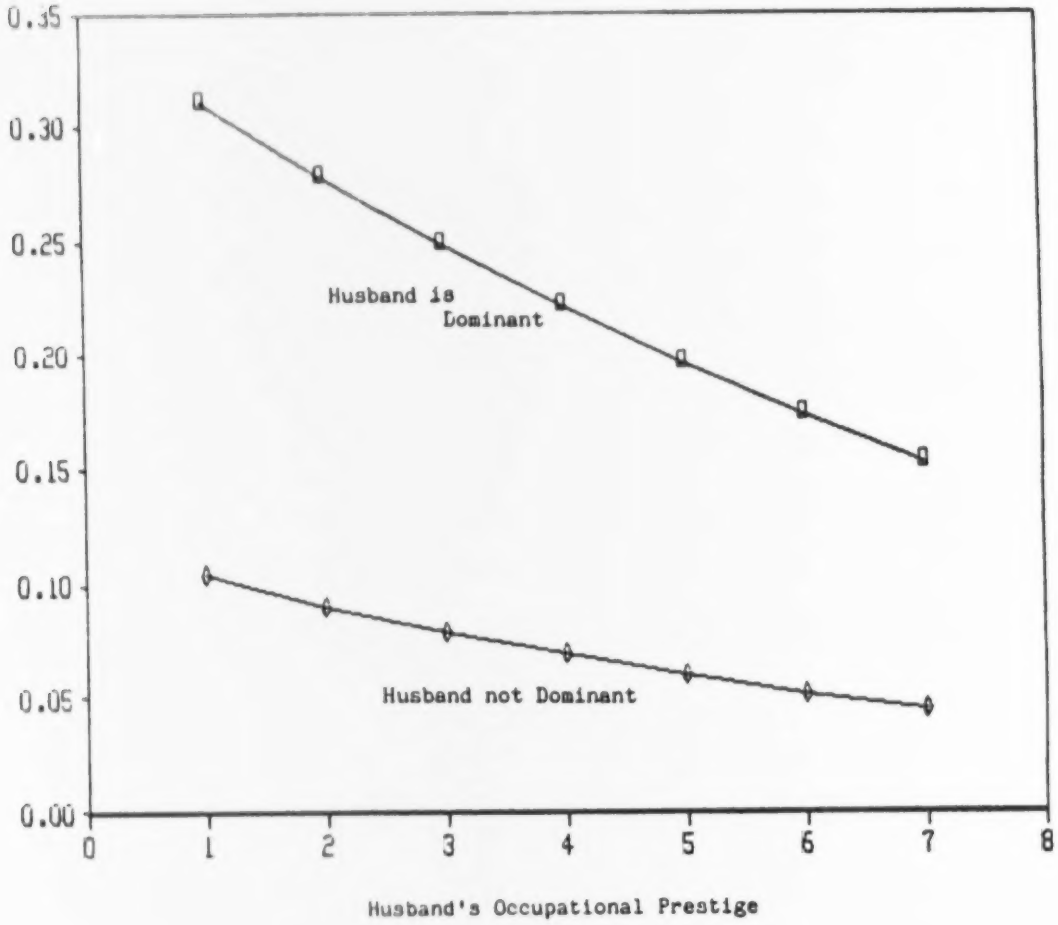

Figure 4. High Status Concern Husbands:
Probability of Husband-to-Wife Violence
by Husband's Occupational Prestige

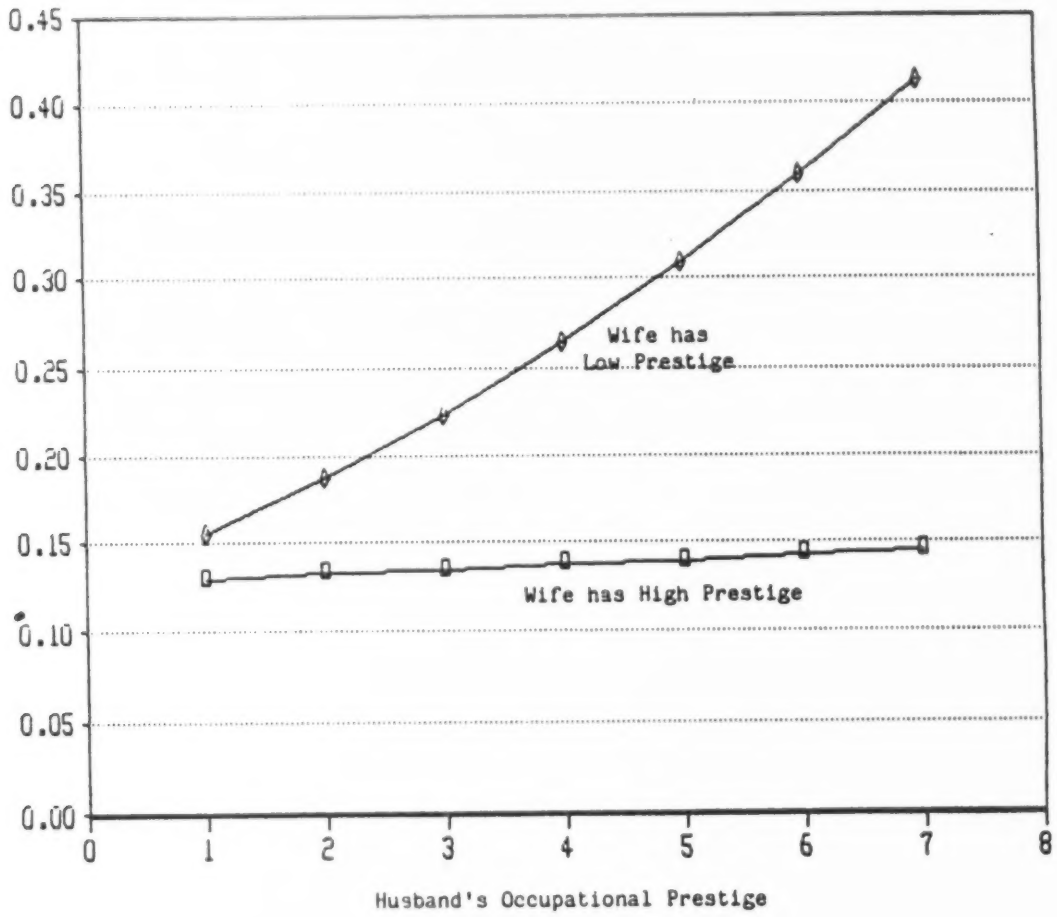

Table 1. Background Characteristics of the Sample

Variable	Measures	Statistic
Socioeconomic Variables		
Husband's Education	Mean (s.d.)	12.23 (2.58)
Wife's Education	Mean (s.d.)	11.99 (2.19)
Husband's Income	Median	$11,000
	% < $10,000	39.7%
Wife's Income	Median	$500
	% < $1,000	52.1%
Husband's Occupational Prestige	Mean (s.d.)	3.66 (1.3)
	Median (range)	4.00 (1 to 7)
Wife's Occupational Prestige	Mean (s.d.)	3.45 (1.2)
	Median (range)	3.00 (1 to 7)
Control Variables		
Age of Husband	Mean (s.d.)	42 yrs. (14)
Age of Wife	Mean (s.d.)	40 yrs.(14.5)
Race of Respondent	% Black (n)	7.1% (147)
	% Hispanic (n)	3.3% (68)

Table 2. Correlation Matrix of Socioeconomic Variables

Variable	educh	presth	incomeh	educw	prestw	incomew
educh	1.0000					
presth	0.5056	1.0000				
incomeh	0.4144	0.3701	1.0000			
educw	0.6611	0.3690	0.3155	1.0000		
prestw	0.4470	0.3116	0.2841	0.5828	1.0000	
incomew	0.1880	0.0827	-0.0443	0.2521	0.2357	1.0000
(Valid N)	(2127)	(2092)	(1946)	(2132)	(1876)	(1925)

educh = Husband's Education, educw = Wife's Education
presth = Husband's Prestige, prestw = Wife's Prestige
incomeh = Husband's Annual Income, incomew = Wife's Annual Income

Table 3. Bivariate Logistic Regression Results
Husband-to-Wife Violence on Socioeconomic Status

Variable	Regression Coefficient	(SE)	T	Level of Significance
Husband's Education	.0147	(.0263)	.56	n.s.
Wife's Education	-.0202	(.0310)	-.65	n.s.
Husband's Income	-.000038	(.000009)	-4.18	p <.000
Wife's Income	-.00005	(.000018)	-2.76	p <.01
Husband's Occupational Prestige	-.1128	(.0537)	-2.10	p <.05
Wife's Occupational Prestige	-.2545	(.0618)	-4.12	p <.000

Table 4. Logistic Regression after Backward Elimination
Status Variables on Husband-to-Wife Violence

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t	Prob >|t|
intercept	-2.332153	.4140368	-5.633	0.001
Husband's education	.1553914	.0379243	4.097	0.001
Husband's income	-.0000614	.0000119	-5.143	0.001
Wife's income	-.0000872	.000022	-3.967	0.001
Husband's prestige	-.1632516	.0688222	-2.372	0.018
Husband's prestige if wife's is low	.1585276	.0484733	3.270	0.001

Log Likelihood = -586.17442, Number of cases = 1578
chi-square = 69.18, d.f. = 5, $p < .001$

Table 5. Logistic Regression after Backward Elimination of Status Variables and Husband Dominance on Husband-to-Wife Violence

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t	Prob >|t|
intercept	-2.417147	.4234481	-5.708	0.001
Husband's education	.156246	.0383154	4.078	0.001
Husband's income	-.0000467	.0000139	-3.349	0.001
Wife's income	-.0001053	.0000262	-4.016	0.001
Husband's prestige	-.1533438	.069337	-2.212	0.027
Husband's income if wife's is low	-.0000242	.0000134	-1.805	0.071
Husband's prestige if wife's is low	.1572973	.0486957	3.230	0.001
Husband Dominance	.4654997	.236585	1.968	0.049

Log Likelihood =-579.35008, Number of cases = 1565
chi-square = 75.35, d.f. = 7, $p < .001$

Table 6. Logistic Regression Status Variables and Husband Dominance on Husband-to-Wife Violence: High Status Concern Husbands Subsample

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t	Prob >|t|
intercept	-2.45957	.6237	-3.944	0.001
Husband's education	.091454	.0564131	1.621	0.105
Husband's income	-.0000465	.0000222	-2.091	0.037
Wife's income	-.000087	.0000387	-2.249	0.025
Husband's prestige	.0221297	.1019023	0.217	0.828
Husband's income if wife's is low	8.40e-06	.0000199	0.422	0.673
Husband's prestige if wife's is low	.2012335	.071649	2.809	0.005
Husband Dominance	.3489885	.3564447	0.979	0.328

Log Likelihood =-256.20499, Number of cases = 648
chi-square = 24.19, d.f. = 7, $p < 0.001$

Appendix Table 1. Logistic Regression of Status Variables on Husband-to-Wife Violence

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t	Prob > |t|
intercept	-2.899293	.8179447	-3.545	0.000
Husband's education	.2191323	.0639545	3.426	0.001
Wife's education	-.0057731	.0716851	-0.081	0.936
Husband's income	-.0000408	.0000156	-2.604	0.009
Wife's income	-.0001256	.0000332	-3.779	0.001
Husband's prestige	-.1928584	.0910151	-2.119	0.034
Wife's prestige	-.0420096	.1060458	-0.396	0.692
Husband's education if Wife's is low	.0074751	.024906	0.300	0.764
Husband's income if Wife's is low	-.0000279	.0000139	-2.004	0.045
Husband's prestige if Wife's is low	.128563	.0694746	1.851	0.064
Wife's education if Husband's is low	.0332089	.0252622	1.315	0.189
Wife's income if Husband's is low	.0000371	.0000418	0.887	0.375
Wife's prestige if Husband's is low	-.0407571	.0821081	-0.496	0.620

Log Likelihood = -582.69455, Number of cases = 1575
chi-square = 75.27, d.f. = 12, $p < .0001$

Appendix Table 2. Logistic Regression of Status Variables and Husband Dominance on Husband-to-Wife Violence

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t	Prob > |t|
intercept	-3.019562	.8218891	-3.674	0.000
Husband's education	.2198512	.0644397	3.412	0.001
Wife's education	-.0043218	.0725682	-0.060	0.953
Husband's income	-.0000398	.0000156	-2.547	0.011
Wife's income	-.0001211	.0000331	-3.663	0.000
Husband's prestige	-.1879002	.0911227	-2.062	0.039
Wife's prestige	-.0377291	.1061501	-0.355	0.722
Husband's education if wife's is low	.0079715	.0250284	0.318	0.75
Husband's income if wife's is low	-.0000286	.0000139	-2.057	0.04
Husband's prestige if wife's is low	.1314521	.0696505	1.887	0.059
Wife's education if husband's is low	.0331697	.025335	1.309	0.191
Wife's income if husband's is low	.0000361	.0000415	0.870	0.384
Wife's prestige if husband's is low	-.0459142	.0828502	-0.554	0.580
Husband Dominance	.4563254	.2367744	1.927	0.054

Log Likelihood = -577.42513, Number of cases = 1562
chi-square = 78.34, d.f. = 13, $p < 0.001$

Appendix Table 3. Logistic Regression Status Variables, Husband Dominance, and Age of Husband on Husband-to-Wife Violence

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t	Prob >|t|
intercept	.764626	.5806861	1.317	0.188
Husband's education	.0467432	.0423498	1.104	0.270
Husband's income	-.0000315	.0000148	-2.132	0.033
Wife's income	-.0000935	.0000272	-3.435	0.001
Husband's prestige	-.1081935	.071445	-1.514	0.130
Husband's income if wife's is low	-.0000236	.0000139	-1.695	0.090
Husband's prestige if wife's is low	.1186529	.0504085	2.354	0.019
Husband Dominance	.3625288	.2453406	1.478	0.140
Husband's age	-.0572837	.0073201	-7.826	0.001

Log Likelihood = -541.41474, Number of cases = 1562
chi-square = 150.36, d.f. = 8, $p < .001$